

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

DANIEL DE LEON:

FROM REFORM TO REVOLUTION

1886-1936

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by ARNOLD
PETERSEN

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By Arnold Petersen

An address delivered at the Daniel De Leon Birthday Commemoration in New York City, December 14, 1936, by Arnold Petersen, who knew De Leon personally, and who for twenty-three years has been the National Secretary of the Socialist Labor Party. In this speech De Leon's evolution from reformer to Revolutionist is briefly sketched. Particular attention is given here to the fallacy of reform or "immediate demands," advocacy by those who profess to be revolutionists. The fact is underscored—and established conclusively by concrete instances—that reforms are, and inevitably *must* be, concealed measures of reaction.

The address terminates in a "lighter vein," with informal references to De Leon as an "intensely" human being—his family life, his fondness for the outdoors, etc., etc.

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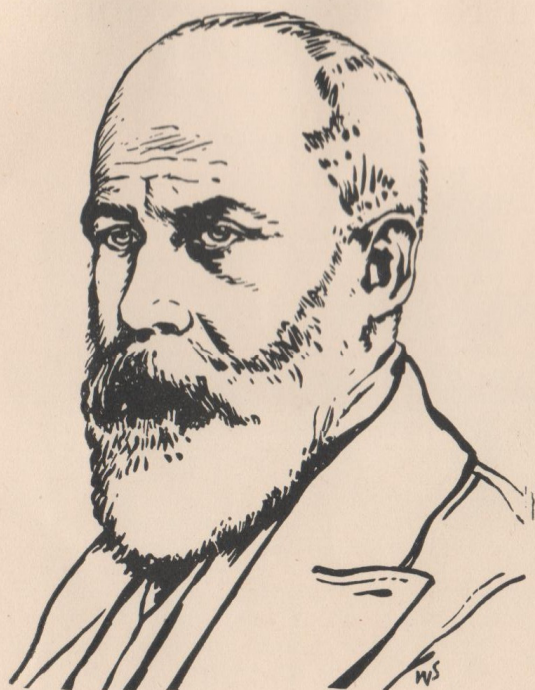
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D. De Leon

(From a pen drawing by Walter Steinhilber.)

Daniel De Leon:

From Reform to Revolution

1886-1936

By ARNOLD PETERSEN

Address Delivered at the Annual De Leon Birthday Celebration,
New York City, December 14, 1936.

NEW YORK LABOR NEWS COMPANY
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1937

Give us a truce with your "Reforms."
There is a sickening air of moral mediocrity in all such petty movements of petty, childish aspirations at times like these, when gigantic man-issues are thundering at every man's door for admission and solution.

—DANIEL DE LEON.

(Printed in the United States of America.)

CONTENTS.

I	5
	<i>Significance of year 1886 in America: De Leon enters labor movement through "cat's-paw"; New era in capitalism and corresponding new era in labor movement; Engels on America in 1886.</i>	
II	8
	<i>De Leon illustrates evolution of a Socialist from reform to revolution: Through "cat's-paw," Henry George Single Tax movement, to undeviating stand with revolution; Speech on behalf of Henry George's candidacy for mayor of New York; Repudiation of Single Tax and reform; Engels's probable influence on De Leon; Contrast of De Leon with Eugene Debs, "muddled and incurable reformer."</i>	
III	15
	<i>Labor union question and reform movements focal points of De Leon's constructive Socialist philosophy and his iconoclasm: De Leon relentless toward reformer, petty bourgeois variety and especially those usurping name of Socialism for deception of workers; Exposures of racketeering pseudo-Socialists; Arraignment of "one-thing-at-a-timers."</i>	
	The reform illusion — defined by Lassalle, by De Leon in "Reform or Revolution"; Reforms as "concealed measures of reaction" illustrated by Sherman anti-trust law and its application to Danbury Hatters and U.S. Steel Corporation, respectively; Minimum wage reform shown to be badge of slavery; De Leon again quoted on reforms.	
	Reformers use revolutionary phraseology in pleas for palliatives; De Leon follows path of Marx and Engels in attacks on reformers, his language fitting subjects of attack; "Bourgeois Socialists," personified by Meyer London and Victor Berger, and their arguments on taxation, exposed by De Leon; De Leon and Engels on taxation, cooperatives, workers' savings, etc.; De Leon logic rejected by Socialist party and American Federation of Labor for its threat to sinecurists; Lincoln quoted on same subject.	
	Enemies of De Leon and the Socialist Labor Party; Hillquit, his comments on De Leon; Debs on Socialist Labor Party; De	

Leon exposes charlatanism in Spargo's biography of Marx—also exposed by Franz Mehring; Scores Berger's old-age pension offered in Congress as Socialist; De Leon's prophecy: "The S.P. is bound to go down!"

IV37

De Leon the "father of Industrial Unionism": Principles of Industrial Union Government outlined in "Burning Question of Trades Unionism" (1904) and completed in "Socialist Reconstruction of Society" (1905); Former gave impetus to calling of "first convention of I.W.W.," latter followed convention; Defines role of Industrial Union Government.

Industrial Unionism clashes with craft unionism of American Federation of Labor: Gompers's hatred of De Leon for exposing A. F. of L. as "organized scabbery"; Recent maritime strike bears out De Leon's contention that A. F. of L. is strikebreaking agency; De Leon on need of economic as well as political organization of workers; Theories vindicated by failures of Europe's Social Democracies.

Lenin on De Leon and his contribution to Socialism.

V45

Essential humanity of the man, De Leon: Memoranda of Mrs. Bertha De Leon; De Leon's appreciation of Artemus Ward whom he calls "Aristophanes of America"; De Leon illustrates "proletarian status" with Ward's "The Negro Question," here quoted; Also to show that only labor question important to Socialist movement, not racial or religious questions; His contempt for self-sacrificers, stuffed shirts and double-dealers in the movement.

De Leon America's greatest social scientist in pre-war days; the Socialist Labor Party a monument to his genius.

I.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of De Leon's entrance into the American labor movement. It was in 1886, to use De Leon's phrase in his great lecture, "Two Pages from Roman History," that a "cat's-paw" drew him within the whirl of the labor movement. These fifty years have also witnessed the emergence and phenomenal growth of plutocratic capitalism, or capitalist imperialism. The year of 1886 will undoubtedly, by future historians, be chosen as the line of demarcation between the old, and comparatively idyllic, period which came to a definite close with the ending of the Civil War, though its echoes resounded and its departing shadows lengthened into the succeeding two decades, and the period of expansion which had ripened and revealed itself in its naked imperialism in the McKinley Administration. By 1886, this new era in American capitalist development had taken definite shape, and with this came also the termination of that provincialism, that aloofness from the world in general, which theretofore had characterized the North American Republic—a provincialism and an aloofness which were the natural reflexes of a country with what seemed (and at one time practically was) an unlimited land area, with practically unlimited, and all but inexhaustible and all-sufficient natural resources. There were, indeed, valid economic reasons for the oft-quoted statement of Washington referring to foreign alliances and entanglements from which the American people were enjoined

to keep free. There were sound reasons for the Monroe Doctrine of exclusiveness. For Monroe's doctrine was the logical counterpart of Washington's emphatically declared non-interference policy with respect to European affairs, as De Leon pointed out—singularly enough in that very year of 1886—in a monograph published in the *Political Science Quarterly*.*

It was not strange, then, that the middle eighties should have witnessed the rise of the modern American labor movement. Capitalism, whenever and wherever it emerges, revolutionizes conditions and the concepts of men. Even as capitalism, in its ruthless march, clears the jungle, and contracts the world, so it clears out the fog produced by undeveloped conditions and transitional periods, and causes underlying issues to become more clearly perceptible and better understood. International capitalism inescapably draws the various capitalist nations closer together, with endless and equally inescapable clashes on the one hand, and the application of ideas and practices of one country to another country, on the other hand. And of all the phenomena that accompany capitalist development anywhere, none is more certain of making its appearance than the labor movement. For the labor movement, properly understood, is begotten of capitalism. No other previous social system produced, or could have produced, a labor movement, although there were, of course, rebellious groups and uprisings in the preceding social systems.

That the United States could not be kept immune

*"The Conference at Berlin on the West African Question," by Daniel De Leon. *Political Science Quarterly*, March, 1886.

from the effects of expanding capitalism, at home and abroad, was a foregone conclusion, and so clearly recognized by the founders of Scientific Socialism. Frederick Engels, writing in 1886, observed that in "ten months a revolution has been accomplished in American society such as in any other country, would have taken at least ten years." He said further: "In February, 1885, American public opinion was almost unanimous on this one point: that there was no working class, in the European sense of the term, in America; that consequently no class struggle between workmen and capitalists, such as tore European society to pieces, was possible in the American Republic; and that, therefore, Socialism was a thing of foreign importation which could never take root in American soil. In European countries, it took the working class years and years before they fully realized the fact that they formed a distinct and, under the existing social conditions, a permanent class of modern society; and it took years again until this classconsciousness led them to form themselves into a distinct political party, *independent of, and opposed to all the old political parties formed by the various sections of the ruling classes*. On the more favored soil of America, *where no medieval ruins bar the way*, where history begins with the elements of modern bourgeois society as evolved in the seventeenth century, the working class passed through these two stages of its development within ten months."

Such was the scene, such the promise, so far as the labor movement was concerned, in America in 1886. Capitalist development had produced the setting for a revolutionary labor movement; the golden opportunity for embarking the ship of revolution at flood tide was there—but the man to serve as a symbol of proletarian

emancipation, and to seize the opportunity for service in the cause of the proletariat, was still wanting. "Der den Augenblick ergreift," said Goethe, "Das ist der rechte Mann"—he who grasps the right moment, he is the right man. The "right moment" did not, however, have long to wait for the right man. He came, not full fashioned and perfected for the job, nor at all clear as to the need of the hour, but fully equipped, mentally and morally, and ready to be molded by that need, ready to serve as the instrument of social progress, and gifted as few other men of his time. Daniel De Leon, student and scholar, passionate devotee of right and justice such as he then understood right and justice, stepped upon the scene in that tumultuous year of 1886.

II.

As intimated, De Leon knew little, or nothing about the labor movement at this time. The names of Marx and Engels were probably familiar to him, but they must have represented, as they did to most educated men of the period, nothing more than expressions of a discontent that was thought typical, or exclusive, of the troubled European scene. No man springs into the arena of social struggles with definite and final views on the questions that agitate a given period, and still less does he come to the struggle with a complete understanding of the causes that produce these struggles. It was certainly so with De Leon. We may, indeed, say that just as De Leon analyzed the elements of reform and revolution as scientifically and accurately as no man except Marx had done it before him, and none after him, so, in his own person, and in his own evolution,

did he represent the stages *from* reform to revolution. Keen and scholarly as were his comments in his *Political Science Quarterly* monograph just referred to, he here reveals himself, nevertheless, as a man filled with illusions with respect to men and movements. He speaks, for example, of Bismarck in terms of high praise, as "a figure of such magnitude, such power, and such controlling influence that it immediately became the central figure of all." He refers to Bismarck as addressing the Reichstag "in language that was as significant as it was poetic." Yet, even at this early stage, and despite his apparent admiration for the peculiar genius of Bismarck, De Leon was nevertheless already then keen enough to sense that the design of even one so powerful as Bismarck might be thwarted by circumstance. For in the monograph he said: "Ethnic causes may be silently at work that may counteract the efforts of Prince Bismarck to solve the social problem with which he is grappling."

A typical example of De Leon's early, but very brief, reformism is found in a speech which he delivered in New York on October 1, 1886, in behalf of the candidacy of Henry George, the Single Taxer. The *New York Tribune* of October 2 reported the meeting (which was well attended, hundreds having been turned away), and introduced its summary of De Leon's speech with the following comment:

"Dr. Daniel De Leon, professor of international law in Columbia College, was the next speaker. He spoke with a strong French [!] accent, but fluently."

Here follows De Leon's speech which I reproduce in full as reported, because it has a historic interest,

and also because it helps to remind us that not all reformers, at all times, and under all circumstances, are fakers. And also because it illustrates De Leon's remark about the "cat's-paw" that drew him within the whirl of the labor movement. It follows that but for that "cat's-paw" (which is as good a term for the Single Tax as any other!) De Leon—brilliant and scholarly as he was—might have gone on to the end of his days, wasting his scholarship and talents on futile reform causes. This is what De Leon said:

"It does not often fall to the lot of an American to have an opportunity of speaking in support of a man who, if elected, will give us government of the people, for the people, and by the people. (Applause.) We are now going before the people upon an issue; not upon twaddle, but upon truth; not upon platitudes, but upon principles which enlist the manhood of every decent citizen, that appeal to the heart of every feeling man, and that commend themselves to the judgment of every thinker. We have hitherto been ruled in this city by a small minority that have no interest whatever in our welfare. They are professional politicians whose headquarters are in the rum and grog shops, with points of vantage in the slums of our city, recruiting their strength from the criminal classes and in time swelling the ranks of those classes. These fellows do not care who is the nominee so long as he has money, and they await the result of all elections as the hungry wolves await carrion, for that is the time when their riotous carnival comes. It is not what brains or what common sense or what capacity for government a man has, but what boodle he has. (Applause.) The other element is the inordinately wealthy who have no interest in how

we are governed for the simple reason that it is the unfortunate crushed masses who pay the taxes in this city. (Applause.) Many of these people, nearly all of them, are called by courtesy the residents of New York. (Laughter.) Are they? Not at all. They hold an occasional levee or reception during the winter months—once in a while get one of their daughters married perhaps (laughter), and those that they want to get married they put on exhibition until somebody comes along who will marry them. (Renewed laughter.) During the very cold months, like birds of passage, they go down to Florida and other mild climates, and in the summer they have villas by the sea. When election time comes these also have their candidates—the rich who do not pay the taxes. The more genteel class of politicians have their 'heelers' as well as the other classes. (Laughter.) If you tax them as residents they're non-residents; and if non-residents, they're residents. (Renewed laughter.) The large land owner is the worst element in this city." [The speaker then read a lease, which, he said, was typical of the general condition of things in the city, providing that the tenant should discharge "all duties, taxes, assessments, etc., extraordinary as well as ordinary." He went on:]

"When that clause is signed, what cares the landlord? Riot, plunder, disturbance, even occupation of our city by a foreign foe, may come: what cares the landlord? He will not have to bear his due share of the damage. If such a breaking out occurred here as did in Paris during the Revolution, according to our law it is a riot, and the city would have to pay for the damage, while the landlords were, perhaps, living in Paris. We have not had one honest Mayor during my residence of fifteen years in this city, and if Henry

George be elected, we shall have made a beginning."
(Applause.)

There is, indeed, a far cry from the De Leon who said in that speech that it was the "unfortunate crushed masses" who paid the taxes, and that the rich do not pay the taxes, to the De Leon who proved, scientifically and conclusively, that the working class does not pay the taxes—who proved, in keeping with Marxian economics, that taxes are paid by the property-holding class only. And it is instructive to contrast De Leon's interest in Henry George, and the Single Tax, with the snappy estimate he gave later of both the man and his vagaries. In 1900 we find, for example, De Leon saying in a Letter Box answer: "A truce with your Henry George and his Single Tax flatulency! The two are extinct, the one as much as the other!"

It did not, indeed, take De Leon long to perceive the fallacy of the Single Tax notion. His subsequent studies of Marx and Engels very soon convinced him that nothing short of the abolition of capitalism, of wage slavery, would solve the social problem. Possibly he read at this time the scathing criticisms of George's theories by Marx and Engels—or possibly he reasoned himself through the fallacies and absurdities of the Single Tax theories. It is quite probable, for instance, that he read what Engels wrote in 1886:

"To Henry George, the expropriation of the mass of the people from the land is the great and universal cause of the splitting up of the people into rich and poor. Now this is not correct historically. In Asiatic and classical antiquity, the predominant form of class-oppression was slavery; that is to say, not so much the

expropriation of the masses from the land as the appropriation of their persons. When, in the decline of the Roman Republic, the free Italian peasants were expropriated from their farms, they formed a class of 'poor whites' similar to that of the Southern slave states before 1861; and between slaves and poor whites, two classes equally unfit for self-emancipation, the old world went to pieces. In the middle ages, it was not the expropriation of the people *from* but, on the contrary, their appropriation *to* the land which became the source of feudal oppression. The peasant retained his land but was attached to it as a serf or villein, and made liable to tribute to the lord in labor and in produce. It was only at the dawn of modern times, toward the end of the fifteenth century, that the expropriation of the peasantry on a large scale laid the foundation for the modern class of wage workers who possess nothing but their labor power and can live only by the selling of that labor power to others. But if the expropriation from the land brought this class into existence, it was the development of capitalist production, of modern industry, and agriculture on a large scale which perpetuated it, increased it, and shaped it into a distinct class with distinct interests and a distinct historical mission."

Once De Leon took a step forward, there was never any backsliding. In this respect he differed from others who had passed through reform movements to the revolutionary labor movement. Take Debs, for example, the one man usually cited by capitalist commentators as being outstanding among the pioneers in the American labor movement. Debs was imprisoned in 1894 for his activities in connection with the Pullman strike in that year. It is reported—though the report has all

the earmarks of myth-making—that while in jail he read Marx's "Capital," and became converted to Marxism. It is my opinion that if Debs did read "Capital," the net result, as far as his understanding of economics and the social movement was concerned, was nil. It is my further opinion that if Debs did read "Capital" in jail, it was not only the first, but the last time that he ever perused that great work. While in 1895 Debs had declared that Socialism was the only remedy, in 1896 he stumped for the capitalist politician and demagogue, Wm. Jennings Bryan, and for free silver! Then, in 1897, Debs gave a practical illustration of his conception of Socialism by urging the workers to form co-operative colonies—within capitalism. In a speech delivered in Chicago on June 16, 1897, Debs pleaded for support of the movement which he sponsored, and which, so he insisted, through payments in monthly installments would soon be in a position to start the new "pioneers" on the road to "emancipation"! Fervently Debs argued that "under the supervision of able and experienced persons the foundations of the new order [!] will be laid, lands will be secured, machinery and tools will be provided, the soil will be cultivated and industrial enterprises will be established...." Later Debs landed in the Social Democratic party, blowing hot and cold with regard to the revolutionary requirements and implications of the Socialist movement, and particularly with regard to the one thing to which he should have stuck, namely, Socialist Industrial Unionism, which he sponsored as ardently, and dropped as nonchalantly, as he had sponsored and dropped "co-operative colonies" and similar utopian schemes.

We have, in the case of Debs, a splendid example of the muddled and incurable reformer, as contrasted

with the clear-headed, scholarly man, as in the case of De Leon, who, though beginning as a reformer, soon emancipates himself, and forever lays aside the fetters of intellectual bondage. Consistency, firmness of purpose and intellectual integrity are the hallmark of the man of science, of the revolutionist, thoroughly anchored to principle, even as zig-zagging and back-sliding are the characteristics of the petty bourgeois reformer and ranting sentimental anarchist.

III.

The two subjects, above all others, that occupied De Leon's mind, were reforms and their relation to the revolutionary movement, and the labor union question. He explored the highways and byways of both subjects, searched every nook and cranny, so to speak, of these important subjects, illuminating dark places with the cold steady light of his powerful intellect. The two subjects are, in fact, focal points for all that is of any importance in the revolutionary movement. It can also be said that they dovetail into, or overlap, each other. In short, one conditions and ultimately determines the other.

There can be no doubt that De Leon's early experience with reformers and reform movements left a lasting impression on him. He ever acted on the principle that once you assume a certain something as given, you cannot proceed in disregard, or in violation of that something. You cannot accept revolution as your premise, for instance, and then work out a program of reform. You cannot accept Socialist Industrial Unionism as your premise, and then support or tolerate or com-

promise with craft unionism. Relentlessly, during his many years of activity in the Socialist Labor Party, De Leon exposed the reform folly in what was supposed to be the revolutionary movement. Logically and mercilessly he pilloried the reformer, particularly if and when he paraded his reform nonsense in the name, and under the banner, of Socialism. For reformers, as he well knew, were not all of one kind. Roughly the species may be divided into two main groups. First, there are the avowed petty capitalist reformers who honestly and naturally desire to save capitalism, but who conceive that it cannot be done unless the system is reformed—that is, until its worst abuses are eliminated, as they usually phrase it, and the “poor” and oppressed are cared for in a humane and kindly manner, as they piously put it. Secondly, there are the reformers who proclaim Socialism as their goal, and who imply revolution, even though they dare not proclaim it openly. The former variety of reformers are consistent up to a certain point. They are usually propertied elements who are being crowded to the wall by big business. They want to save their social system, and they are willing to give up some of their privileges and property in order that they may retain the major portion. These elements are usually the most reactionary in society, the more so in that they contend even more bitterly against the workers (into whose ranks most of them are eventually hurled), than they do against the plutocracy which threatens to destroy them. But their fear of the plutocracy is as nothing compared to their hatred of the revolutionary working class. Yet they will not hesitate to use the workers in their struggles against the plutocracy, and, because they clothe their reform pleas, and their denunciation of big business in general, and bankers in

particular, in would-be radical, or “socialistic,” terminology, they frequently succeed in enlisting the support of the workers, as we have witnessed particularly this last election. Yet, fatedly, in their very struggles for reforms they are indirectly, and often unwittingly, helping to make still more secure the position of the plutocracy, or the economic royalists, to use President Roosevelt's now celebrated phrase.

The other variety of reformers consists of those who fly the flag of Socialism, who proclaim their goal to be the Socialist Commonwealth, and who designate themselves, now Social Democrats, now Communists. Many of these are so ignorant of Marxian Socialism, so confused generally, and incapable of reasoning from facts to conclusions, that they are unable to explain rationally just why they advocate reforms while their programs (however visionary) at least imply revolution. Or, if asked to explain their illogical position, they may repeat, parrot-like, the sophistries handed them by those of greater cunning. Those who know better, and yet preach reform in the name of Socialism, invariably tell us that reforms are “psychologically” necessary even if they are incapable of being realized. Regardless of the conclusions of Marxian science, and despite facts proving the contrary, the workers must be made to believe that there is something immediately ahead which they can lay hold of. In short, these intellectually dishonest reformers would wave before the workers promises of petty improvements exactly as a whisk of hay is sometimes placed before the donkey in order to make him go faster. This attitude on the part of the dishonest reformer implies measureless contempt for the working class. It is, in effect, a declaration that the workers are too stupid to perceive their true class inter-

ests when properly and simply presented to them; it is a slanderous implication that the workers consist of a herd of dumb, driven cattle. And in this, as in other respects, the would-be "socialist" or "communist" reformer is in complete agreement with the avowed capitalist reformer, for both view the workers with contempt, as something that must be tolerated, but otherwise to be kept in place, when not needed to pull chestnuts out of the fire for scheming politicians.

And what, in the final analysis, is the justification of these reformers for tricking and deceiving the working class? Their justification is that unless such deception is practiced on the workers, the labor movement will get nowhere. After nearly four decades of such fraudulent practices by reformers who mouth Socialist phrases incessantly, we find that they have got precisely—nowhere! Yet, this will not deter them in pursuing the same dishonest policies, for regardless of what happens to the workers the reform-fakers make a living—and some of them a very good living, indeed! Just as the labor fakers draw down annual salaries of \$12,000 and upward (plus the extras), so these reformers, in one way or another, succeed in capitalizing the notoriety they achieve as public pests and nuisances. There is the lecture racket, the debate racket, the book-writing racket, to mention just a few, not to speak of the regular salaries they draw through multitudinous "offices" they hold. Oh yes, one-step-at-a-time pays well indeed—but not for the workers! As De Leon, with biting scorn, said:

"There is this much to be added in the arraignment of the one-thing-at-a-timers: Just as soon as they have got a job for themselves, the one-thing-at-a-time to be

arrived at becomes the keeping of the job. In order to accomplish that they must keep all others just where they are, or else the job comes in jeopardy. Thus the one-thing-at-a-timers are about the corruptest pack in the movement."

Just so—once labor in America comes of age, the occupation of the reformer—the easy living and the pleasant spotlight in which he basks—will be gone forever.

The question of reform is, then, one of utmost importance to the labor movement. The reform illusion is the father-illusion, so to speak, of a litter of subsidiary illusions which in turn react upon, and feed the major illusion. Moreover, the vagaries of the reformer are reflected also in his methods and organizational practices. In his famous lecture, "Reform or Revolution," De Leon elaborates extensively on these points. "Reform," he said, "means a change of externals; Revolution—peaceful or bloody, the peacefulness or the bloodiness of it cuts no figure in the essence of the question—means a change from within." Ferdinand Lassalle put the matter succinctly when he said:

"Revolution means transmutation, and a revolution is, accordingly, accomplished whenever, by whatever means, with or without shock or violence, an entirely new principle is substituted for what is already in effect. A reform, on the other hand, is effected in case the existing situation is maintained in point of principle, but with a [supposedly] more humane . . . working out of this principle."

In other words, reform implies incidental changes and adjustments in conformity and harmony with the

prevailing social principle. Revolution means to substitute for the prevailing social principle an entirely different, or directly opposite principle. Again, and speaking now particularly of capitalism, reform inescapably means preservation of capitalism—if that were possible indefinitely. "Reform if you would preserve [capitalism]," said President Roosevelt in the recent campaign to the American plutocracy. Revolution means, and can mean nothing else, to abolish, to discard, to destroy capitalism, root and branch. Reform (urged on no matter what ground) means to mend capitalism; revolution obviously means to end capitalism, and can mean nothing less than that. Reforms, even as revolutions, are the responses to social wants that are being prevented from being satisfied in the normal course of events. Reforms, as we have seen, will "satisfy" these wants very much as the eating of bark might be said to satisfy a person dying of starvation. Logic establishes, and experience proves, that every reform enacted is a measure of reaction—and the more so in that reforms ever are offered in the concealment of "gifts" to the exploited workers, whereas they invariably are designed as, or certainly turn out to be props for the collapsing structure of capitalism, or even as weapons for the use of the plutocracy in consolidating its power and stranglehold on society. A few illustrations will prove this. Take the Sherman anti-trust law. Designed to curb the monopolistic elements, and to protect the lower layers in capitalist society (including, putatively, the workers), it has become notorious for the manner in which it has been used to punish workers for applying, however feebly, their organized power to check capitalist aggrandizement. The case of the Danbury hatters is the outstanding example of its kind.

Early in the century members of the hatters' union declared a boycott against a firm of hat manufacturers in Danbury, Conn. A few years later the Supreme Court found that the union had violated the Sherman anti-trust act (!), and fined the union the stupendous amount of \$240,000, which was later confirmed by the United States Supreme Court. And this, despite the fact that those who originally sponsored the act had emphatically assured representatives of the A. F. of L. that the act would never be used against labor unions. But when an attempt was made to apply it as its reformer sponsors had intended, namely, against a trust—the United States Steel trust—the United States Supreme Court rendered a decision in favor of the steel trust! No stronger evidence could possibly be found to prove De Leon's contention that reforms under plutocratic capitalism are concealed measures of reaction.

Or take the minimum wage laws in effect in a number of states. Designed to prevent depression of wages below a certain point, the minimum wage becomes the *maximum wage*, other things, of course, being equal. For if the law says that a worker in such and such an industry must not be paid less than \$20 per week, then the law thereby says that on \$20 per week the worker can and ought to subsist. But if the worker can subsist on \$20, and unless there is a shortage of workers (of which there is no prospect now or for the rest of the lifetime of capitalism), and regardless of the fact that later \$20 may not be enough to keep a worker alive, let alone take care of his family decently, it should be clear that the capitalist employers (who in such cases are the most law-abiding people conceivable!) will pay no more. Thus, if and when enacted into law, the minimum wage act would constitute, in effect, an iron

collar around the neck of the worker, and an additional chain around his limbs—serving, in fact, as the legal, the official, badge of his slavery. Whether reforms are direct aids to capitalists in exploiting the workers, or in perpetuating the capitalist system by deceiving the workers through causing them to believe that improvement of their lot under capitalism is possible, the palpable fact remains that reforms are, and necessarily must be, measures of reaction. "Short of the abolition of wage slavery," said De Leon, "all 'improvements' either accrue to capitalism, or are the merest moonshine where they are not sidetracks." And in another place he said:

"In America, where Capitalism and Socialism face each other without any feudal encumbrances, a party of Socialism has no business to tinker with 'reforms.' 'Reforms' [De Leon continued] only tend to sweet-scent the capitalist rule. For Socialism in the United States to bother with reforms is like washing the garbage before dumping it into the can. Away with the garbage of capitalism."

One often hears these ranting reformers (those of the Social Democratic and Communist variety) denounce capitalism in terms implying supreme horror and contempt of the system; or in terms implying that the system is utterly rotten, or, again, in terms suggesting that capitalism is like a house on fire, and fit only to permit it to be consumed by the flames. Yet these same puerile reformers will plead now for this improvement, now for that amendment, for the security of those who are the victims, and who at the same time are called upon to be the demolishers of the system. This spectacle is as consistent as would be the attitude

of the "moral" reformer who berates the presence of brothels, and urges their destruction, while in the same breath suggesting methods for decorating, and generally making attractive these brothels! Or as would be the attitude of the person who witnessed a building burning to the ground, and who at the same time would discuss whether the dining room in the burning building ought to be repainted before the house is consumed by the flames. To be sure if a house *is burning*, and if its occupants are trapped in it, the only important task is to save these people. But the way to save them would be, not to make the burning house comfortable for them, but to get them out of the roaring hell of flames. And so the way to save the working class now being destroyed or demoralized by the conflagration of capitalism is not to make them comfortable (even if that were possible, which it is not) but to get them out—out of the blazing hell of the body- and soul-destroying system, and into the body- and mind-redeeming Socialist Cooperative Commonwealth.

All of this was clear to De Leon long before there was any considerable body of men back of him to support him. Tirelessly he exposed the horrors of capitalism; repeatedly he demonstrated the logic of Socialism; and again and again he lashed the reformers — lashed them with scorn, with merciless satire, with devastating and brilliant wit, but, above all, with cold facts — facts propelled by irresistible logic, and as deadly as the bullets from an automatic machine-gun. And seldom did his bullets go astray—rare was the occasion when his bullets of facts, impelled by his logic, did not make a bull's-eye hit.

In his attacks on reforms and reformers De Leon followed closely the path previously blazed by Marx

and Engels. When one reads what Engels, for instance, said about reforms and reformers, the question instantly intrudes itself: Is this De Leon, or is it Engels? And this is true even to the very tone of the criticisms. De Leon, as we know, was often accused of being abusive and vitriolic in his language. Both Marx and Engels were similarly charged. It is of interest here to note what Engels replied to such criticism of his language, or tone. "I am not going to quarrel," he said, "with friend Muehlberger about the 'tone' of my criticism. When one has been so long in the movement as I have, one develops a fairly thick skin against attacks, and therefore one easily presumes also the existence of the same in others. In order to compensate Muehlberger I shall try this time to bring my 'tone' into the right relation to the sensitiveness of his epidermis." Similarly, De Leon insisted that if a spade was a damned spade, then "damned spade" was the proper designation. When the S.P. fakers insisted that the working class pays the taxes, he exposed the fraudulent contention in language suited to the impudent and dishonest contention. The tax question is one of those subsidiary reform issues so dear to the heart of the Social Democratic and Anarcho-Communist reformers. For the sake of convenience we may apply to both varieties of reformers (being essentially alike) the term used by Engels, namely, "bourgeois Socialists" and advocates of "bourgeois Socialism." A characteristic summary of the argument of "bourgeois Socialism" on the tax question is found in the utterance of Meyer London, who was S.P. Congressman during the war. Addressing Congress on January 31, 1917, Mr. London spoke thus:

"All taxes, whether they are called income taxes or

whether they are taxes paid in the form of a tariff, are paid by the men and women who work. No matter who sends the check for the tax to the tax collector, the taxes are paid by the people who contribute useful service."

Quoting Victor Berger, shining light of the S.P., as charging that the rich "cajole and overawe the [tax] assessors to shift the [tax] burden upon the working class by unjust assessments—by over-assessing the little property of the workingman and by under-assessing the property of the big manufacturer or big merchant," De Leon exposed Berger (as well as Meyer London and the rest of the fakers or simpletons who argue similarly) by pointing to the incontestable *fact* that as a *class* the workers own no assessable, hence no taxable, property. De Leon pointed out that the ruse of alleged "indirect taxation" is not resorted to here, but that it is boldly asserted that the tax-assessors are trying to shift the burden of taxation—"upon—whom? [asks De Leon] Upon the exceptional workingman who owns assessable property?—Why no!—'upon the WORKING CLASS!'" In language that is typical of De Leon, and as vigorous, Engels exclaims: "Taxes! Matters that interest the bourgeoisie very much, but the worker only very little. What the worker pays in taxes [i.e., incidental and petty taxes] goes in the long run into the value of labor power and must therefore be compensated for by the capitalist."

As with taxes, so with all the rest of the petty reform schemes, and utopian pleas for improvements under capitalism, or reforming or revolutionizing capitalist society behind its back, all of which De Leon hit hard. Right now there seems to be a revival of the

oft-exploded cooperative movement nonsense—that is, it is nonsense so far as the workers are concerned, but to the capitalists it would be a grand idea if put into practice, since it would produce cheaper labor power, hence more surplus values for the capitalists. Here again Engels hits the “bourgeois Socialist” reformers hard, and in language that instantly calls to mind De Leon. “What has been said above [said Engels] applies to all so-called social reforms which aim at saving, or cheapening the means of subsistence of the worker. Either they become general and then they are followed by a corresponding reduction of wages, or they remain isolated experiments, and then their very existence as isolated exceptions proves that their realization on a general scale is incompatible with the existing capitalist mode of production.”

As to saving, this brings to mind an incident at a lecture delivered by De Leon somewhat over 25 years ago. De Leon explained lucidly the law of value, and all its corollaries, and pointed out that the worker who starves himself, and denies himself the essentials of life, in order to put money in the bank, is doing a foolish thing. For, in the first place, said De Leon, he merely “proves” to the satisfaction of the capitalist that he can get along on less than he is being paid, with the result that, with a glutted labor market, the wages of that worker will be reduced. Moreover, said De Leon, by putting money in the bank, the workers place at the disposal of capitalists (who borrow from the banks) additional funds with which to exploit still further these and other workers. De Leon’s argument was logical and convincing. During the question period some one arose—obviously a workingman—and with a

troubled expression asked the speaker for advice. It seems that the questioner had saved up a few hundred dollars, and the idea of the capitalist exploiters’ using his savings to exploit the workers (himself included) did not appeal to him at all. What was he to do? De Leon looked at him with a twinkle in his eye, and said, in substance: “Well, if you don’t see the wisdom of enjoying yourself as much as you can for the little money you have saved up, and *while* you can do so, I would advise you to put your savings in a pot, bury the pot, and sit on top of it!”

How closely Marx, Engels and De Leon reasoned along the same lines is seen from this observation by Engels: “Give every worker a saved, independent income of 52 thalers a year and his weekly wage must finally fall by one thaler. Therefore the more he saves the less he will receive in wages. He saves therefore not in his own interests, but in the interests of the capitalist.” And in language almost identical to that used by De Leon, and to the identical effect, Engels sums up the question of saving, of cheap living, of cooperatives, etc., etc., in this statement, which to all who boast of being Marxists should be regarded as axiomatic:

“Every reduction in the cost of production of labor power is equivalent to a reduction in the value of labor power and will therefore finally result in a corresponding fall in the wages.”

Despite the obviousness of all this — at least to those who claimed to be Marxists, and who wrote “learned” tomes on “the theoretical system of Karl Marx,” “the essence of Marxism,” and what not — De Leon constantly, and to the very end, had to com-

bat the crude, bourgeois notions prevalent in the S. P. and, through the S.P., wherever Socialism was supposed to be accepted in principle—outside the S.L.P., of course. Although the reform program and general policies of the S.P. were incontestably bourgeois (as judged by Marxian standards); although in many cases it was not even a case of relying on logical deductions from the law of value, and Marxian economics in general; although it was possible, again and again, to quote Marx and Engels in direct refutation of these capitalist principles and capitalist economics, the effect on the reformers, and their deluded followers, was nil. But then, you see, De Leon was attacking vested interests when he attacked the reform character of the S.P., or when he attacked the capitalist character of the American Federation of Labor. And vested interests, as we all know, are immune to reasoning. It is not easy to convince the possessor of wealth that he has no just title to that wealth; nor is it easy to convince the fellow who holds a soft job, or one that brings a good and easy living, that he is holding that job wholly through the practice of deception. Material interests have a way of disposing, in cavalier fashion, of anything that in any way threatens the security of such interests. A gold dollar is a pretty thick coating through which to read even the largest print. Lincoln, speaking of the supposed ability of the slaveholders to view the question of slavery objectively, told the following story to illustrate that property, or material and vested interests, influence the mind and actions of persons:

“The dissenting minister [said Lincoln] who argued some theological point with one of the established church was always met with the reply, ‘I can’t see it so.’

He opened the Bible and pointed him to a passage, but the orthodox minister replied, ‘I can’t see it so.’ Then he showed him a single word—‘Can you see that?’ ‘Yes, I see it,’ was the reply. The dissenter laid a guinea [gold coin] over the word, and asked, ‘Do you see it now?’ ”

And Lincoln concludes:

“So here. Whether the owners of this species of property [i.e., slaves] do really see it as it is, it is not for me to say; but if they do, they see it as it is through two billions of dollars, and that is a pretty thick coating.”

And so it was—and so is even the \$12,000 to \$15,000 salaries paid A. F. of L. officials, or the fat emoluments that accrued to the S.P. politicians, shyster-lawyers and peddlers of literary groceries, who fought De Leon, and who were fought by him until in rage they revenged themselves upon him by slandering and vilifying him as were few men before or since.

Morris Hillquit, an ignoramus in all matters pertaining to Socialism, but a cunning lawyer, amassed a fortune. De Leon, again and again, pointed to the fact that the bulk, or certainly the basis of that fortune, was derived from exploiting the distress of workingmen, and their unions, who had got in difficulties with capitalist employers. As a result, Hillquit hated De Leon with all the consuming hatred of a petty character whose personal ego and private interests were being opposed by a man of great intellect and unimpeachable character. The things Hillquit is reported to have said privately about De Leon while he lived would scarcely be fit to print. Many years later, in his autobiography,

Hillquit made a rather amusing attempt at paying a tribute to De Leon. It sounds as if it were copied from a tribute rendered by a lawyer to his "distinguished and learned opponent" at a trial. But even as it is written it constitutes the unwilling tribute (apart from the incidental slurs and misrepresentations) rendered truth by error. Here it is:

"De Leon was unquestionably a person of great erudition, rare ability, and indomitable energy. He served the cause of Socialism, as he saw it, with single-minded devotion. He had unshakable faith in Socialism and its future, but his greater faith was in himself. He never admitted a doubt about the soundness of his interpretation of the Socialist philosophy or the infallibility of his methods and tactics. Those who agreed with him were good Socialists. All who dissented from his views were enemies of the movement. He never compromised or temporized outside or inside the Socialist movement. 'He who is not with me is against me,' was his motto and the invariable guide of all his political relations and practical activities.

"Daniel De Leon was a fanatic. A keen thinker and merciless logician, he was carried away beyond the realm of reality by the process of his own abstract [!] and somewhat Talmudistic logic.

"Of small stature, mobile features, and piercing black eyes, he was a distinctly southern type. He was a trenchant writer, fluent speaker, and sharp debater. For his opponents he had neither courtesy nor mercy. His peculiar traits and methods were not due entirely to his personal temperament and character. In part at least they were the logical expression of his social philosophy. De Leon was not a social democrat with the

emphasis on the 'democrat.' He was strongly influenced by the Blanquist conception of the 'capture of power,' and placed organization ahead of education, politics above economic struggles, and leadership above the rank and file of the movement. [De Leon who warned against mere 'leadership'!] He was the perfect American prototype of Russian Bolshevism."

As if in anticipation of Hillquit's vulgar charge that De Leon was a fanatic, Eugene V. Debs, two years before De Leon's death, said of the S.L.P. (with De Leon in mind particularly, of course):

"It is foolish to say that the S.L.P. is dead..... Many of my early lessons in Socialist economics were taught me by that little 'bunch of fanatics.' I can never forget that little band of valiant comrades — frenzied fanatics if you please, but still of the stuff of which revolutions are made. For years they were a mere handful, and yet they fought as if they had legions behind them. Staunchedly they upheld the red banner in the face of an indifferent or hostile world—and this years before some of those who now scoff at them had shed their bourgeois politics. There are not many of them, but few as they are, they have the backbone to stand alone. There are no trimmers or traders among them."

This was not the first or only time that Debs — whose instinct was proletarian despite his inconsistencies, his occasional lapses into utopianism, and his vacillating propensities—it was not the first or only time Debs criticized the lying and spitefully derogatory attacks on De Leon and the S.L.P. by his own associates in the corrupt S.P.

In another passage Hillquit says: "There was never much love lost between Daniel De Leon and me." How could there be? There was nothing in common, absolutely nothing, between De Leon, the man of towering intellect, of unquestioned probity, who chose a life of poverty to serve the proletariat, and Hillquit, the puny ferret-like intellect, with his shyster-lawyer propensities, who amassed wealth by capitalizing his supposed leadership in the labor movement. De Leon stands as a monument of proletarian dignity and integrity, representing the best and noblest in man. Hillquit stands as a monument of petty bourgeois reformism, representing all that is sordid and ignoble in the labor movement. Indeed, there could be no "love" between them, as little as there could be between revolution and reform, or between the exploited working class and the exploiting capitalist class.

The tribe of lawyers in the S.P., accordingly, generally hated De Leon heartily because they *knew* that he was on to their game, and judged them and their sincerity of purpose accordingly. The scribblers, or peddlers of literary green goods in the S.P., hated De Leon as ardently as did the lawyers, because they too knew that he saw through their posturings and their charlatanism. Among those who particularly felt the sting of De Leon's lashes were Wm. J. Ghent and John Spargo, both of whom long ago recanted their "radical" heresies, and returned to the out-and-out bourgeois fold. Mr. Spargo has risen to such eminence that he is now a spellbinder for the G.O.P., having battled valiantly this last election for the illustrious son of Kansas. (He has been strangely silent since and, being, above all, a practical man, it is not impossible that he may be considering a proposition from Mr. James Farley.)

However, Spargo was one of the most prolific among all the S.P. scribblers, and there wasn't a subject on which he could not talk "learnedly," and with hardly an effort. In an evil hour, however, he conceived and executed a biography of Marx. Among his chief qualifications for the task were a very considerable ignorance of Marxism, practically no knowledge of Marx's life except what he cribbed from more or less reliable and secondary sources; and, finally, a complete ignorance of the intricacies of the German language. De Leon exposed his ignorance and his brazenness in an editorial which I should have liked to quote here, if time had permitted. Simultaneously the great German Marxian historian and biographer of Marx, Franz Mehring, went for Spargo, and he did not spare him either. The following is a typical instance of Spargo's charlatanism, and is taken from Mehring's review of a German translation of Spargo's worthless book which appeared in *Neue Zeit* in 1912. Characterizing Spargo's book as "a worthless compilation from a mass of preponderating German writings," Mehring observes that some of the "most humorous blunders" of the English edition had been corrected. He then shows how Spargo, in cribbing from one of Mehring's own works on Marx, and knowing little or nothing about the German language, had misunderstood a word, and manufactured a biographical item of Marx which must have caused the old German scholar and fighter to roar with laughter and rage alternately. Spargo, in the English edition, says that Rudolf Erbrecht was a teacher of Marx. Mehring (from whose work Spargo pilfered the reference) had said that Marx studied "Erbrecht" ("inheritance law") under Professor Rudorff!! Professor Rudorff, authority on "Erbrecht," i.e., "inherit-

ance law," becomes Rudolf Erbrecht! Perfectly simple—if one only possesses the Spargonian genius and formula! De Leon published Mehring's review in the *Daily People* under the heading, "Mehring Pillories Spargo." How De Leon enjoyed that incident! It furnished him with an illustration, and a text, for his contentions that the S.P. officialdom and scribblers were cheap and vulgar fakers, and that it was such as these who represented American Socialism in the eyes of the European Socialists. For Spargo was, of course, only one of the horde who produced such literary garbage, employing the same methods, and possessing the same unscrupulousness as, or even more than, he himself.

Victor L. Berger was another S.P. faker who felt the sting of De Leon's merciless criticism. Berger was the politician *par excellence*—a complete nonentity who achieved national prominence because he got himself elected to Congress. Berger was no more of a Socialist than was La Follette, and intellectually was far below that astute reformer. Had Berger been elected as a Democrat or a Republican he would never have attracted attention. But carrying the label "Socialist" (fraudulent as it was) he achieved a certain notoriety. However, if he is remembered hereafter it will be chiefly because of De Leon's scathing criticism of him as "Socialist" Congressman. Among other things Berger conceived and framed an old-age pension law which differed (among other things) from the present so-called Security Act in that it fixed the age at which the proposed pensions would be effective at 60 instead of at 65, and also in that the pension was fixed at \$2.50 per week. De Leon exposed the reactionary character of this pension scheme, especially reactionary because it was offered as a Socialist measure. And what De Leon

said about the Berger old-age pension monstrosity applies with equal force to the "Security" Act now in force. Said De Leon:

"Everybody knows that the workingman who lives to see his 60th birthday is an exception. Between their 35th-45th years the average workman has been knocked out, either by 'accident,' or by the slower process of overwork, underfeeding, and unsanitary conditions. The overwhelming majority of the 60-year-old in the land are bourgeois. It is the needy among these, the failures in the scramble for the workingman's skin, that Mr. Berger's Old-Age Pension bill mainly brings solace to."

And he concluded:

"Under the hullabaloo of bringing aid to the wage SLAVE CLASS, we have seen an Old-Age Pension bill introduced by Mr. Berger that cannot in the remotest manner accrue to the benefit of the overwhelming majority of the working class, they being wholly excluded by the age limit, and that can be of benefit only to bourgeois mainly."

One could, of course, go on, and on, piling evidence upon evidence to prove that reforms are concealed measures of reaction; that they were and are deliberately fostered to head off revolutionary Socialism; and that the S.P. politicians (and now the Communist party reformers) were and are instruments, consciously or otherwise, in the hands of the plutocracy. Not without reason were the S.P. and other reformers boosted and advertised so generously by the ruling class. Not without reason was De Leon hated and feared and, as much

as possible, left unmentioned by that same class, and by their henchmen and lackeys. His lifelong exposure of, and fight against, the reform illusion, and as a menace to the working class, richly earned him the hatred of the class, and their retainers, whose continued existence and prosperity depend entirely upon feeding the workers capitalist illusions, upon handing out to the workers capitalist arguments—capitalist economics, capitalist politics, capitalist ideology, capitalist morality and capitalist practices in general, of all of which the S.P. has been guilty, and is guilty today, as is also its worthy offspring, the Communist party.

The monstrous absurdity of employing capitalist economics, etc., in the name of Socialism was brilliantly illustrated by De Leon when he said:

"In short, the demeanor of the S. P. officialdom [i.e., the reformers and fakers of all stripes] is at all points as if the party of Lincoln had opened its columns to the slave-holding arguments of Jefferson Davis, and had made ready to invade the South in order to enforce slavery."

And equally illuminating was his reference to immediate demands in the platform of a party claiming to be revolutionist. "As well," said De Leon, "imagine a Declaration of Independence with immediate demands."

Bourgeois reformism, in the name of labor and Socialism, inevitably breeds anarchism. "Parliamentary idiocy," to use Marx's phrase, is followed logically by anarchist imbecility. Anarcho-Syndicalism, i.e., the physical force I.W.W., was the direct result of the reformism of the S.P. Pure and simple politics breeds the pure and simple physical force advocate as maggots

are bred in "ripe" cheese, as De Leon used to say. And again, much later, "parliamentary idiocy" bred Anarcho-Communism which even now is going the way of its predecessor, the anarchist I.W.W. Quoting a classic Latin motto: "Actio equivalet reactio," meaning, "like action, like re-action" — De Leon said in 1913: "What more natural than the reaction of Bakuninism from the action of parliamentary idiocy!" And the crowning triumph of De Leon's contentions is seen in the fact that the corrupt S.P.—the hatchery and dispenser of capitalist reforms for more than thirty-five years—is at last definitely passing out of the picture. What a pity that De Leon could not have lived to witness the fulfillment of his prophetic declaration: "The S.P. is *bound* to go down!"

IV.

There is no time, nor is it the main theme of this subject, to consider in detail the second of De Leon's two main preoccupations in the Socialist movement, namely, labor unionism. A lecture on De Leon, however, would not be complete without reference to Industrial Unionism. De Leon has rightly been called the father of Industrial Unionism. For the first time in the history of the labor movement this vital subject (and its far-reaching revolutionary implications) was dealt with by De Leon in his epoch-making speech, "Burning Question of Trades Unionism" which he delivered in Newark, N.J., in the spring of 1904. It was this speech which gave the impetus to the calling of the conference in Chicago in January, 1905, which produced what is known as the "First Convention of the

I.W.W.," also held in Chicago, in the month of July, 1905. And it was this great speech which furnished inspiration and guidance to the delegates assembled, among whom De Leon instantly exerted a commanding influence. And that other great speech delivered in Minneapolis on July 10, 1905, now known under the title, "Socialist Reconstruction of Society," may be said to be an amplification or enlargement of the Newark speech. In the latter De Leon outlined, and in the former he completed, the principles and structure of Industrial Unionism—of Industrial Union Government. Beginning with a careful analysis, and ruthless criticism of the pro-capitalist A. F. of L., with its scab-herding practices; demonstrating the labor-dividing, unity-destroying character of the A. F. of L., of its affinity with the capitalist juggernaut of exploitation, and proving the traitorous nature of the labor fakers, De Leon finally showed that Industrial Unionism alone could serve the class interests of the workers. But, above all, he demonstrated with irresistible logic that the Socialist Industrial Union was destined to fulfill the role of the machinery of government in the new social commonwealth of emancipated labor. In classic language, charged with fervor, yet showing the restraint of the scientist, the keen and logical thinker, De Leon said:

"Civilized society will know no such ridiculous thing as geographic constituencies. It will only know industrial constituencies. The parliament of civilization in America will consist, not of Congressmen from geographic districts, but of representatives of trades throughout the land, and their legislative work will not be the complicated one which a society of conflicting interests, such as capitalism, requires, but the easy one

which can be summed up in the statistics of the wealth needed, the wealth producible, and the work required—and that any average set of workingmen's representatives are fully able to ascertain, infinitely better than our modern rhetoricians in Congress. . . ."

The apologists of capitalism, and the spokesmen of the plutocracy in particular, are fond of repeating the Jeffersonian precept that that government is best which governs least. And the petty capitalist reformers (who identify themselves as being of the vast majority in the country, and who look upon their petty property status as being the normal or "ideal" condition to defend) frequently quote that other Jeffersonian precept, viz., that it is the true function of government to secure to the greatest number the greatest good. The moment, however, these precepts are urged in behalf of the wage workers (who constitute the overwhelming majority in society) large *and* petty capitalists begin to salaam before the Constitution, or to yell for the police. However, if they really meant what they said, and said what they meant, we can answer that the Industrial Union Government conforms to the Jeffersonian precepts cited, as no other form of government in our day does, or can.

As De Leon points out, the task of the Industrial Union Government is the easy one "summed up in the statistics of the wealth needed, the wealth producible and the work required. . . ." There are no class or group interests to defend, hence no class conflicts, in the Socialist Republic. There will and can be no bureaucrats—of whom hordes inevitably spring up under capitalism and political class rule in general—for, contrary to the vulgar and erroneous assumption (or deliberate-

ly fostered misrepresentation), the government under Socialism will not "own" the industries. *The workers, organized in local Industrial Unions, will own and control their union government*, representation being from the bottom up—the broadest and most responsive democratic form of government conceivable. And by the same token, the Industrial Union Government — De Leon's great contribution to the world's progress — will secure to the greatest number the greatest good. For what *can* be more inclusive than all who perform intellectual and manual labor for society, and what greater good can be conceived than the full social product of one's labor, multiplied by cooperative effort, and by all the marvelous inventions and devices of our modern age? This is the answer, then, of De Leon, and of the Socialist Labor Party, to those who, falsely or ignorantly, charge Socialism with being a despotism, or a bureaucracy, or what not. There is indeed no greater despotism than the despotism of the capitalist absolutism that rules in the factories, workshops, etc., and there is no greater slavery than the economic serfdom imposed by capitalism upon the workers *as a class*.

In his advocacy of Industrial Unionism De Leon hurled a challenge, not only at the plutocracy and the capitalist system in general, but also at those two regiments of capitalist shock-troops, the reformers and the corrupt labor fakers of craft unionism. De Leon had portrayed these capitalist agents too vividly and too truthfully for them ever to forgive him. Gompers and his lieutenants hated De Leon with a venomous hatred that knew no limits, and the charge that blinded them with fury more than any other was that the A. F. of L. was a strike-breaking, a scab-herding concern. *They knew the charge was true*. And that it was true, not

primarily because of the wickedness of the labor fakers (willing tools though they were) but because of the structure and pro-capitalist philosophy of craft unionism, De Leon proved again and again, with undeniable facts and forceful logic. And De Leon's indictment is as valid today as it was in his own day. The very latest instance is discovered in the maritime strike now raging—the strike which the labor fakers have outlawed—not merely locally but at the recent Tampa convention. Outrageous and sinister as is this betrayal, it merely confirms all that De Leon ever charged against the labor fakers, and constitutes the latest vindication of De Leon's clear-sightedness, of his penetrating analytical powers, of his knowledge and understanding of the modern plebs leader, and his unfaltering and unselfish, though seemingly thankless, services to the exploited workers. In a letter sent by Harry Bridges, chairman of the International Longshoremen's Association, Pacific Coast district, and addressed to Joseph P. Ryan, president of the I.L.A., and designated as a letter sent to Ryan "condemning Ryan for his strike-breaking activities," we find the following illuminating and enlightening passages:

"It is, therefore, regrettable and nauseating to the membership of the I.L.A., Pacific Coast District, and to those labor unions that are part of the organized labor movement of the West Coast, to now see I.L.A. men, under your orders, in some Eastern and Gulf ports working ships that have been struck by the I.L.A., and maritime unions on Pacific and Atlantic Coasts. This is strikebreaking!

"You use as an excuse for your role of shipowners' agent and strikebreaker, that some seven or eight inter-

coastal steamship lines with head offices in New York agreed to grant the demands of the I.L.A., Pacific Coast District. You believe this is sufficient excuse to employ gangsters and thugs, to attack [sic] the picket lines of seamen who are on strike against miserable conditions and wages; striking seamen whose present wages for a full month is less than sums you many times spend for expenses in one day. Your salary of \$1,250 per month is more than a seaman earns in an entire year."

As Heine would say:

"Es ist die alte Geschichte
Doch bleibt sie immer neu!"

'Tis the same old story, though it is ever new!

Being under the illusion, apparently, that the "strike-breaking activities" are due merely to Ryan's wickedness, rather than to the "principles" of craft unionism itself, Harry Bridges adds, in a pathetic appeal to labor faker Ryan:

"We also feel, as part of an International Union that is primarily supposed to be motivated and guided by trade-union principles, the entire organization should recognize the first basic principle of trade-unionism, i.e., not to act as strikebreakers against other workers closely allied to us, and who are fighting a splendid battle of democratic unionism and for just demands, as are the present maritime workers of the American Merchant Marine."

Well!—Ryan *did* "recognize the first basic principle of American trade [i.e., *craft*] unionism" when

he heeded the call of the bosses and responded to their need by furnishing them with scabs. What else *could* be expected of the A. F. of L., of *organized scabbery*! What a text this would have furnished De Leon for another blast against fakerdom!

In a passage which is a masterpiece of condensation, De Leon sums up, with great skill and clarity, the tactical requirements involved, and upon the observance of which absolutely depends the success of the emancipation movement of the working class:

"The bona fide or revolutionary Socialist movement needs the political as well as the economic organization of labor, the former for propaganda and to conduct the struggle for the conquest of the capitalist-controlled Political State upon the civilized plane of the ballot; the latter as the only conceivable force with which to back up the ballot, without which force all balloting is moonshine, and which force is essential for the ultimate lock-out of the capitalist. Without the political organization, the Labor or Socialist movement could not attain the hour of its triumph; and without the economic organization, the day of its triumph would be the day of its defeat. Without the economic organization, the movement would attract and breed the pure and simple politician, who would debauch and sell out the working class; and without the political organization, the movement would attract and breed the agent provocateur, who would assassinate the movement."

We have seen the truth of De Leon's contentions demonstrated a thousand times. European history during the last twenty-two years—the identical period that has passed since De Leon's death — has demonstrated

that pure and simple politics, and pure and simple, or Social Democratic politicians, have betrayed the working class, and left it to the tender mercies of a ruling class which has wrecked, and sunk in a sea of blood such as existed of working class organizations. The tragedy of Italy, the tragedy of Germany, the supreme tragedy and sorrow of bleeding Spain are directly chargeable, in large part, to the stupidity, the ineptness, and above all to the treachery of a corrupt and incompetent self-styled leadership. Again and again, at International Socialist Congresses, De Leon warned those at the head of the European movement—warned them against the very pitfalls into which they and their organizations were to fall later; pleaded with them to heed the sane, reasoning voice of the Marxian S.L.P.; implored them to turn from the path of social-reformism, from class-collaboration, from corrupt and demoralizing influences. But in vain. Even Lenin, so keen an observer in other things, failed to be impressed by De Leon on these occasions. Only much later—four or five years after De Leon's death—did Lenin recognize the genius, the greatness of De Leon, of whom he said that he was the only Socialist who had contributed to the science of Marxism since Marx. To Arthur Ransome, well known English writer and essayist, Lenin said that "he remembered seeing De Leon at an International Conference" but that "De Leon made no impression at all, a grey old man. . . ." We who knew De Leon, who have sat spellbound by his logic, by his burning eloquence, his masterful presentation of whatever subject he chose for the given occasion—we who have seen him in action know that if De Leon made no impression on the European Socialists, so-called, the fault was not De Leon's. De Leon made no impression on the Kaut-

skys, and the rest of them, because these Social Democrats were so set, so self-centered, so filled with their own imaginary importance, so sure that their perverted Socialism was pure Marxism, and because they viewed America, and all things American, with contempt, or with a feeling of patronizing pity. Why Lenin was not impressed is not explained by Ransome. Possibly Lenin was too preoccupied with his own problems which, in a sense, were akin to those that confronted De Leon. It is significant, however, that it was a Russian who of all European Socialists should have discovered and acknowledged—however belatedly—De Leon's genius and his great contribution to Marxian science. For Russia, as we know, constitutes the one exception that is said to prove the rule—that is, except for small groups here and there, Russia is the one, and the only European country, where the banner of Proletarian Emancipation still floats. How long, or how high, that banner will continue to float there is a question that many are beginning to ask themselves. But the day will come when the name of De Leon will be a household word in every land that eventually will behold the sun of Socialism in all its glory. For De Leon and De Leonism are immortal.

V.

I should like to close in a lighter vein and on somewhat of an intimate note. De Leon was intensely human. Great scientist and original thinker though he was, his essential humanity constantly asserted itself and he delighted in doing those things that have always appealed to the sons of Adam everywhere. In a memorandum on De Leon prepared by his widow, Mrs.

Bertha C. De Leon, some years ago, a number of delightful instances are cited to illustrate De Leon's human traits and predilections. A few passages from that memorandum will, I am sure, be of interest on an occasion such as this. Said Mrs. De Leon:

"The battle that he waged in the labor movement seldom affected his serenity, and he was as much interested in the first tooth of the baby or the newest word spoken by the toddler, or the newest bird's nest discovered by the older ones as though the momentous social problem had never existed. He read and told innumerable stories to the children, but the most popular ones were original with him, (and) were brimming with humor and entirely out of the ordinary."

Like Marx, so De Leon liked to be surrounded by friends and comrades. As Mrs. De Leon said:

"De Leon was fond of companionship, and there are friends and comrades all over the country who at various times have shared our bread and laughter. . . . De Leon [continued Mrs. De Leon] had a positive genius for enjoyment. Boating, swimming, fishing, gardening . . . reading aloud from his favorite humorists—Artemus Ward leading—all shared by members of the family and Socialist Labor Party members, contributed to his recreation and pleasure. He also keenly appreciated the best in music and art."

Mrs. De Leon's reference to De Leon's fondness for gardening recalls to mind a visit I made to his home in Pleasantville early in the summer of 1913. It was a hot day, and De Leon was digging a trench for the purpose, as I recall it, of planting potatoes. The perspira-

tion was pouring down his face, dropping right into the holes he had dug. As I came over to him he looked up at me, and with the familiar twinkle in his eye he said: "This is the first time I have fully realized the complete significance of the Biblical curse: 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.'"

De Leon derived immense pleasure from reading Artemus Ward, whom he considered America's greatest humorist, and one of its keenest social and political satirists. He referred to him as the "Aristophanes of America," and had, in fact, chosen that very subject for a lecture that he was to give the spring in which death stilled his voice forever. I had occasion to confer with De Leon frequently in regard to that lecture, for we were arranging to have it stenographically reported. The labor movement, and the literary world, for that matter, lost a treasure in not having this lecture delivered. A characteristic flash of De Leon's own humor is revealed in a letter which he wrote me in February, 1914, while lying ill in bed. It was dictated to Mrs. De Leon, and had to do with the matter of reporting stenographically his proposed lecture on Artemus Ward. I quote this brief passage from the letter:

"Mr. De Leon sends to say that he can have no objection to any address of his being taken stenographically by a comrade. The trouble is that these stenographic reports carry with them visions of hard work fixing the copy for the press. Next to Jehovah and compositors, Mr. De Leon says, stenographers are the wonder workers."

To which a good many of us will say: Amen!

As Mrs. De Leon observed, he liked to read aloud

Ward's stories, partly for pure enjoyment, but also in order to illustrate or underscore some particular point of the gravest importance to the labor movement. A passage such as this one, for instance, gave him keen delight: "I am happiest," wrote Artemus Ward, "when I am idle. I could live for months without performing any kind of labor, and at the expiration of that time I should feel fresh and vigorous enough to go right on in the same way for numerous more months." De Leon would chuckle as he read this. With the sickly sentimentalism that so many people affect who adopt a "cause," he had no patience whatever, and the people (whether Party members or not) who would come with quavering voices, ranting about the superior virtue of being a proletarian, met with short shrift from him. The proletarian status *per se* was nothing to be proud of, De Leon would say. On the contrary, it was a status the proletariat should put an end to as soon as possible by putting an end to capitalism. Apropos of that he would sometimes read Ward's sketch "The Negro Question," and particularly the first few paragraphs, which run as follows:

"I was sitting in the bar, quietly smokin a frugal pipe, when two middle-aged and stern looking females and a young and pretty female suddenly entered the room. They were accompanied by two umberellers and a negro gentleman.

"'Do you feel for the down-trodden?' said one of the females, a thin faced and sharp-voiced person in green spectacles.

"'Do I feel for it?' Ansered the lan'lord, in a puzzled voice—'do I feel for it?'

"'Yes; for the oppressed, the benighted?'

"'Inasmuch as to which?' said the lan'lord.

"'You see this man?' said the female, pintin her umbreller at the negro gentleman.

"'Yes, marm, I see him.'

"'Yes!' said the female raisin her voice to a exceedin high pitch, 'you see him, and he's your brother!'

"'No, I'm darned if he is!' said the lan'lord, hastily retreating to his beer casks.

"'And yours!' shouted the excited female, addressin me. 'He is also your brother!'

"'No, I think not, marm,' I pleasantly replied. 'The nearest we come to that colour in our family was the case of my brother John. He had the janders for sev'ral years, but they finally left him. I am happy to state that, at the present time, he hasn't a solitary jander.' " And so on.

De Leon would invariably remind his listeners that there was no such thing as a race or "Negro question." Years ago he delivered a lecture at the old Arlington Hall on the lower East Side on this subject, explaining carefully that there was only a *social*, a *labor* question, and no racial or religious question so far as the Socialist and labor movements were concerned. During the question period an owlish looking gentleman (who looked as if he had been hatched in the Socialist party) arose and wanted to know from Professor De Leon (the more vicious those fellows were, the more punctilious they would seem about recognizing De Leon's professorial status!)—wanted to know if Professor De Leon would want his daughter to marry a "Chinese wishie-washie." Quick as a flash De Leon replied: "No, *Sir!* Nor would I want her to marry a German, French, English or Scandinavian wishie-washie!" Which

answer effectively squelched the fellow, and brought a storm of applause from the audience.

Among the things that disgusted De Leon was any reference whatever to anyone having "sacrificed" himself for the cause. He looked with suspicion on the fellow who thought the movement was indebted to him. It likewise annoyed him to have anyone suggest that he (De Leon) had sacrificed himself to the movement. As Mrs. De Leon put it: "Nothing more quickly aroused De Leon's ire than to have the word 'sacrifice' applied to him. The man who sacrifices himself is the one who deserts his principles and loses his self-respect, and that was always the end of the conversation."

Nor did De Leon have the slightest patience with the stuffed shirt—the pedantic fellow who would come with much pretension to vast learning, and who yet, as a rule, knew little or nothing, though he might roll off his tongue some terribly involved and erudite-sounding words and phrases. De Leon used to refer to such as these as individuals who use many and strange-sounding words to conceal their thoughts and questionable purposes. We have them with us today, and a recent instance that just came to my notice illustrates to perfection the type De Leon had in mind. There is in New York City a professor who has written many useless and foolish words on the relation of Hegel to Marx, or vice versa. (I happen to have had some correspondence with him.) In a book he has just published he quotes the following perfectly clear, simple and understandable sentence from Marx's "Capital": "Although invisible, the value of iron, linen and corn has actual existence in these very articles." The professorial mountebank must needs muddy this clear stream, and so we get this:

"But it does not follow that because Marx rejects nominalism he must accept an extreme, objective, logical realism which converts the outcome of a process of natural discovery and classification into the ontological presuppositions of that process. Exchange values have no subsistence prior to the existence of commodities in space, time and society. In repudiating Hegel, Marx is also repudiating Plato and the whole Platonic tradition. Exchange value is not a concrete universal since its nature is not altered by the differently qualified use-values which exemplify it. Neither is exchange value, nor any other category of political economy for Marx, an abstract universal such that it can be significantly applied to all possible historical economies."

Whew! As Artemus Ward would have said: "...the old man was allus a little given to slang!" And the woods are full of such "intellectual" word-mongers.

De Leon ever denounced double dealing and mummery. "Say what you mean, and mean what you say." "Dare to have a purpose firm, and dare to make it known"—these were maxims which he never failed to urge upon others and apply to himself. If you conceal your purpose, he would say, you confuse and mislead those whom you would seek to organize under your banner, but you cannot, and you do not, fool the usurping class by your deceptive practices. The class instinct of the exploiters instantly warns them. In the end your clever "strategist" comes a cropper and earns the contempt of both exploiters and exploiters.

*

De Leon, though dead twenty-two years, is more

alive today than ever. The things he fought for, the principles and program he formulated, are receiving an ever wider recognition, consciously or otherwise. The truths he promulgated are being confirmed by time and the tide of events. He alone survives in America as the great, far-seeing social scientist of pre-war days. He has bequeathed a legacy to the working class, and we, of the Socialist Labor Party, are the custodians of that legacy. It is for us to render accessible that legacy, that treasure of revolutionary principles, to the American proletariat. We have done our utmost in that respect, and shall continue in increasing measure to bring to the proletariat the emancipation program as formulated by De Leon. The Socialist Labor Party stands today as the visible monument to De Leon's genius, to his untiring labors in behalf of the progress of the race. We can do no better than to continue to blaze the trail where he left off. And in so doing we derive inspiration from the thought of his achievement, by recalling how he served—unselfishly and nobly—the exploited working class. And we are strengthened in our convictions and determination by our knowledge of the fact that everything that is normal to social progress works in our favor. The usurping class, on the contrary, has everything against it — everything except the present blindness and ignorance of labor. The usurpers are strong only because the working class is weak, **AND THE WORKING CLASS IS WEAK ONLY BECAUSE IT IS NOT ORGANIZED.** Once properly organized, as it *must* and *will* be organized, politically and industrially, there is no power on earth that can resist the working class. And when victory crowns the struggle of the workers, the society with which his name will forever be associated — the society of Liberty,

Abundance and Peace—will likewise soar triumphant: Liberty for all, linked to Abundance and Peace enduring for all!

(The End.)

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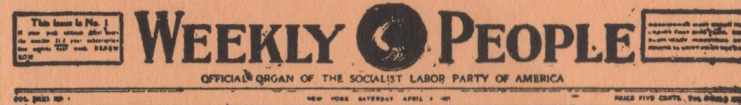
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